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LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

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About the monthly Water Level bulletin
June Precipitation Over the Great Lakes
As a percentage of the long-term June average:
Great Lakes Basin 49%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair) 89%
Lake Superior 33%
Lakes Michigan-Huron 48%
Lake Ontario 39%
Note: These figures are preliminary.
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Volume 3, Number 7 **July 7, 1995**

Lake Level Update

Ontario & Erie Reach Peaks For Year

Water levels on Lakes Erie and Ontario reached their annual peaks in June and are expected to soon begin seasonal declines that will last through late winter.

Last month's forecast indicated that Lake Ontario's level could continue to rise through July. However, light precipitation over the lake's drainage basin kept the water level close to where it was at the beginning of June.

"Lake Ontario began July at 13 cm below its average for the time of year," said Peter Yee of Environment Canada's Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Regulation Office in Cornwall.

Boating Problems

"The seasonal decline means that recreational boaters will probably continue to have difficulties with low water levels in the St. Lawrence River, eastern Lake Ontario and Lac St-Louis for the duration of the season."

Lake Ontario outflows have been reduced since April in an attempt to conserve water on the lake.

Meanwhile, Lakes Michigan-Huron remained near their average level for the beginning of July. Lake St. Clair started the month at 15 cm above its long-term average. Lake Superior's level stayed below average.

Board Meets Public - Superior Well Below Average

Lower-than-average water levels for Lake Superior, and water for the St. Marys Rapids fishery were key discussion topics at the International Lake Superior Board of Control's annual public meeting on June 27.

About 15 citizens turned out at the Civic Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, to hear Board representatives explain how a dry winter and spring combined to

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Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

keep the lake's level 20 cm below its seasonal average by the end of June. As a result of the low water level, Lake Superior's regulation plan calls for reduced outflows. Nevertheless, the lake will likely remain below average for the next six months.

The low Lake Superior levels have caused navigation, launching and docking problems for recreational boaters. March levels even lower than June's also posed problems for commercial shipping (see May Level News).

The public meeting was also told about a proposed field test by the St. Marys River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) to identify flow patterns to enhance fish habitat in the rapids area. The test would experiment with various gate settings at the Compensating Works in order to redistribute the flow of water to the rapids. If funding is approved, the test will take place this summer.

Measurements at Niagara

Staff from Environment Canada and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers spent several days in April and May measuring flows at various points in the Niagara River.

The measurements were part of a regularly-scheduled program to verify continuous flow measurements by gauges used for international water management, and to determine the amounts of water available for various uses under the Niagara Treaty of 1950.

This Canada-U.S. Treaty allocates Niagara water for domestic and sanitary uses, navigation, flows over the Falls and hydropower generation.

Standard current meters were used to measure flows at the Robert Moses Cableway in the lower river, the American Falls and the International Railway Bridge.

Measurements are scheduled every three years at the Cableway and Railway Bridge, and the American Falls meausrements are taken every five years.

Similar measurements are taken, normally every three years, at the Welland Canal Supply Weir. For purposes of the 1950 Treaty, these measurements determine the amount of water entering the Canal. The next Welland Canal measurements are planned for late 1995 or early 1996.

Staff Gauges In St. Lawrence

If you are a recreational boater on the St. Lawrence River, you may have daily access to water level information at your marina.

In 1994, Environment Canada's Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Regulation office installed staff gauges at a number of marinas along the river. These gauges show changing water levels in the river as they occur.

The gauges have been installed at Iroquois, Crysler, Long Sault and Cornwall marinas.

Measurements are given in metres and centimetres above chart datum.

Ask your marina operator whether there is a staff gauge at your location.

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